

democratic socialism. This would involve the nationalization of all foreign-owned industries, the organization of many industries as cooperatives, and comprehensive land reform. The case is well-argued, with pertinent evidence drawn from published sources and his own field research. The tone is earnest but reasonable, a far-cry from the tone of the criticism leveled against his and similar views. Whatever the merits of the author's criticisms and proposals, his ideas deserve to be heard and discussed, not distorted and suppressed.

—Kirk Endicott
Dartmouth College

Amiri Baraka and Amina Baraka, eds. *Confirmation: An Anthology of AfricanAmerican Women*. (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1983) 418 pp., \$17.95, \$10.95 paper.

In his introduction to *Confirmation*, Amiri Baraka points out that the anthology is not “intended, in the same way that *Black Fire* was, to attack the house-negro appropriation of bourgeois aesthetics. Rather the purpose of this volume is to draw attention to the existence and excellence of black women writers.” The volume accomplishes that extraordinarily well. *Confirmation* is a major contribution, for it provides solid illustration of the range of work being produced by an impressive number (an even fifty) of accomplished black women writers.

The problem of doing justice to an anthology such as this in a brief critical review is evident. The wealth of material is simply too great. The collection gathers works by well-known authors such as Maya Angelou, Toni Cade Bambara, Gwendolyn Brooks, Lucille Clifton, Mari Evans, June Jordan, Paule Marshall, Toni Morrison, Carolyn M. Rodgers, Sonia Sanchez, Alice Walker, Margaret Walker and, refreshingly, several of these women are represented by recent and hitherto unpublished works. An added value is the inclusion of material from a host of lesser known writers, some of whom are making their debut in print here.

Although poetry dominates the book, there is a good sampling of prose: short stories, personal narratives, drama, two critical essays. Inasmuch as the overall quality of the volume is so high, one hesitates

to single out individual selections but this is one way to suggest, if only partially, the range of the material included.

For example, Louise Meriwether's "A Man Called Jethro" is a poignant yet curiously upbeat story of an out-of-work custodian who regains his sense of manhood by murdering his former union-busting boss. Toni Morrison's contribution is "Recitatif," a superb story about the relationship of two unloved girls, one black and one white, whose paths cross from time to time as they grow into womanhood and middle-age. And Sonia Sanchez has given us a wonderful short piece, "Just Don't Never Give Up on Love."

Equally impressive is the writing of less familiar authors such as Lois Elaine Griffith's highly original story "Prince Harlem." Perhaps my favorite piece in the entire book is Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor's "Skillet Blond," which, in only a few pages, reveals more about being a black American woman and about the women's movement than anything I can think of.

In his introduction to *Don't Cry, Scream* (1969), Haki R. Madhubuti wrote that "most, if not all, black poetry will be *political*." The political orientation continues to be evident in much of the poetry (and prose, for that matter) in *Confirmation*. The influence of the earlier Sanchez, Giovanni, and Evans is clear. Yet the context has been widened and the revolutionary expression has generally become less strident, more varied, more artistic, and more powerful. An excellent example of the effective use of poetry for essentially political purposes are the five tough-minded and blunt poems by Jayne Cortez.

Two of the strongest poems in the volume are those by Adrienne Ingrum, whose work is, I gather, introduced in this book. Here again, the poetry is essentially political but wedded to an artistry that strengthens the statements by subordinating the element of propaganda, hence realizing a complex and sensitive declaration. In "Loomit," she writes, among other things, of nature and of urban life and concludes that "What is holy and infinite/seems neither to be grass/nor cement/ but the acts of love which hallow them." There are also three excellent and very different poems by Judy Dothard Simmons; one, "Linseed Oil and Dreams," is especially charming.

In editing *Confirmation*, the Barakas have fulfilled a crucial need. The anthology presents material by almost every contemporary black woman writer willing to contribute (except for Nikki Giovanni, who was omitted by the editors because of her trip to South Africa). Though I believe Amiri Baraka is right in stating in his introduction that it is more important for causes to be understood than effects, his strict Marxist interpretation of the causes of the oppression of Afro-American women is too formulaic. The works in the volume demonstrate that the writers themselves perceive things as generally more

complex. As Adrienne Ingram states it: "I must align my aesthetics/with my reality."

—Richard L. Herrnstadt
Iowa State University

Rebecca Chua. *The Newspaper Editor and Other Stories*. (Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1982) 180 pp., \$5.50.

Over the past decade, Sinologists in the West have given much scholarly and critical attention to the study of contemporary Chinese fiction as produced by writers in the People's Republic of China and in Taiwan. In contrast, little scholarly dialogue has concerned fictional works, in Chinese or in any other language, published by writers of Chinese parentage who live outside China or Taiwan and who are known as "overseas Chinese." (A single exception to this is, perhaps, the work of Maxine Hong Kingston.) English language readers interested in contemporary Chinese literature will thus welcome this collection in English of fifteen short stories by the Chinese-Singaporean writer, Rebecca Chua.

Each of these tales speaks for Chua's unusual ability as a storyteller and as a master of the English language, just as each reveals her multicultural background and the facets of that background which she chooses to illuminate. She presents themes used by many creative writers, including those of love, suicide, aging, and corruption but the precision and vividness of her writing bring her readers reflections of human life which are sure to place her beyond the role of mere storyteller.

The world of Rebecca Chua's fiction embraces both an ancient, remote China and a materialistic, technologically superior West. Perhaps it is largely due to this bi-cultural concern of hers that the reader discovers the setting of many of Chua's stories to be unmistakably contemporary, while the location of these stories is frequently unspecified or only hinted at, although it is always urban. Her characters too, be they Lucy or Siew Kuan, Gloria or Ling, move in and out of the two spheres, the perennial struggle of their search for a balance between the two worlds serving as a major theme in her stories.

Rebecca Chua is a keen, perceptive observer of the psychology of young women. Through her stories she identifies and sympathizes